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To

The Duchess of Sutherland

from

SONGS TO DESIDERIA
AND OTHER POEMS

the writer -

January 1909 -



SONGS TO
DESIDERIA
AND OTHER POEMS

BY
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CONTENTS

LYRICS :—

	PAGE
A PRAYER	3
TO GERALDINE	5
THE EIGHTEENTH OF NOVEMBER 1903 .	6
ON READING OSCAR WILDE'S "DE PRO- FUNDIS"	7
FORGIVENESS	9
LOVE AND LOVE	10
THE WHITE ROSE	11
TO ARIEL	13
TO THE FAIR OPHELIA	15
SLEEP	17
MIDNIGHT SAPPHICS	19
THE "COMUS ROOM" IN LUDLOW CASTLE	21

	PAGE
SONGS OF SIR THOMAS MORE'S FOOL .	24
THE PROFESSOR	30
THE ANGELUS	38
AN EPITAPH	40
 GLORIA :—	
HOPE	43
FULFILMENT	53
SEPARATION	58
REUNION	73
LOSS	81
LOOKING BACK	95
 SONGS TO DESIDERIA	 97

LYRICS

A PRAYER

LORD, for the weak and sinful do we pray,
For those with hidden crimes upon their
 hearts,

For him who stifles conscience all the
 day,

But in the night at his own shadow starts !

For lonely ones with no one upon earth
To share the burden of their misery,
On whom no tender guiding hand from
 birth

Was laid to lead their falt'ring steps to
 Thee.

For those who lovèd much and were betrayed,
Left with their sinking dread alone to grieve,
Who, in their anguish, are to pray afraid
To Thee Who wait'st to pardon and receive.

We pray for all who have been trodden
down,
To whom the morning light no comfort
brings,
Who down the wind of this bleak world are
blown,—
Great Bearer of the burdens, King of kings !

TO GERALDINE

STILL to my faults as gentle be

As thou hast been before,

Lest thou shouldst have a grace the less

And I a sigh the more !

THE EIGHTEENTH OF NOVEMBER

1903

WHAT though by me no victory be won,
And hopes deferred fill my day's closing
length,
Yet will I strive while I have life and
strength,
To do, GOD willing, that which can be
done.

And in the vortex of this battle whirled,
Lord, unto Thee I lift my longing eyes,
And to Thine altar bring my hidden sighs,
Sole Comforter in this most pitiful world.

ON READING OSCAR WILDE'S
"DE PROFUNDIS"

OUT of the deep, out of the deep,
With piteous moan,
The ruined soul and body weep
Up to GOD'S throne.

The price of sin, infamy's cost
He came to know,
The utmost agony of the lost,
Mad overthrow!

Now vanished down the lonely stair,
Back to the deep ;
Gone to eternal silence where
The broken sleep.

Can any look himself within
Without a groan ?
Then let him that is without sin
Cast the first stone.

FORGIVENESS

HAD we nothing here to pardon,
Nothing here to be forgiven,
We might seem to be more perfect,
More near to Heaven ;

But the sweetest of all virtues
Would be taken from our lives,
That fair flower in Love's garland
When she forgives.

LOVE AND LOVE

THERE is a love that leaves the passions cold,
Affection without change, misgiving, pain,
Where absence brings no sinking of the
heart,

Where whispered doubts rack not the tor-
tured brain ;

And there's another love with awful power
To build a Paradise wherein to dwell,
Or set its throne up in the pit of pits,
Holding the keys of this life's Heaven and
Hell.

THE WHITE ROSE

AH ! fair white rose of Scotland
How many tears were shed,
To save your plighted honour
How many hearts have bled.

Emblem of faith and fealty
The cold north ever brings
To the forlorn lost causes
And crowns of vanished Kings.

Sweet as her fragrant valleys,
Fresh as her land-locked seas,
Free as the stormy sunsets
Beyond her Hebrides.

True as the mother's blessing
Who o'er the cradle leans,
Dear as the tender bosom
Of my own Queen of Queens.

TO ARIEL

(HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE, *February* 1905)

OH ! dainty dancer ! what rapt virginal love,
What pure enticement fills you as you
move !

Art and sweet Nature, Nature and sweet
Art

Blend in a subtle conquest of the heart.

Happy and ever tireless you seem

As swallow leaping in the gold Sunbeam,

Bright as the Sea's far path of fairy lights

Laughing beneath the moon on summer
nights ;

In tender gesture linking dreams of love
With aspirations earthly thoughts above,
Fair echo of the harmony that steers
The rhythmic revolution of the spheres !

TO THE FAIR OPHELIA

WITH SOME FLOWERS

GATHERED flowers are the fairest,
Sweetest on their dying day,
Giving Death their incense rarest
As they sigh their life away !

You most sweetly win the heart
When like these fair flowers you
 die,
When life-wearied you depart
In your cold death-bed to lie.

But, oh flowers ! born to sorrow,
Breathe not yet your last frail breath ;
Live to comfort on the morrow
Her new life with your sweet death !

SLEEP

GREY-EYED Sister of the night,
Hither, hither wend thy flight ;
Love-sick heart lull thou to rest
Folded to thy quiet breast.

Where thy muffled wing has past
Burning eyes are closed at last,
Till the Eastern clouds are flushed
Sighs in thy soft robe are hushed.

For your coming rich and poor
Wait as suppliants at your door ;

But the broken and the lost
Need thy benediction most.

Enter, then, where watchers weep,
Enter there, beloved Sleep!

MIDNIGHT SAPPHICS

FROM the spent hearth the light is slowly
fading,

Pitiless winds are wailing in the chimney,
Sorrows and fears and memory's sad phan-
toms

Crowd the dim chamber.

Fainter and fainter sink the dying embers,
In the deep shadows rise beloved faces,
Voices are whispering old familiar haunt-
ings

Years never silence.

See, the last flicker dies upon the hearthstone,
Fading away till all is cold and cheerless;
So must the past sink down into the darkness
Ashes to ashes!

Hark, how the rain is beating on the window!
Out in the storm the houseless and forsaken
Suffer in silence, while the howling whirl-
wind
Shows them no mercy.

High in his palace warmly lies the prelate,
Under the hedge the wretched tramp is
dying,
Let the heart break, for, sure it is, the
crooked
Cannot be straightened!

THE "COMUS ROOM" IN LUDLOW CASTLE

WHERE is now the measured music
Framed to clothe the lofty rhyme,
Through this stately hall that echoed
In the day of Ludlow's prime ?

Where are now the gentle ladies
And the silken youths so gay,
Ranged along the gorgeous hangings
From these walls now bulged and
grey ?

All are gone ! the broad roof vanished
From which hung the swinging lights,
Through the long drawn windows
 shining
To the far-off shepherd wights.

Ruins following the poet,
Back to earth down-crumbling slow,
All forgetful of the glories
That they looked on long ago.

Thoughts of passion, dreams of
 beauty,
Sojourned here and fled away,
Leaving but the skull that held
 them
Bleaching in a drear decay.

Thus do all our efforts perish,
E'en the highest and the best,
Ruthless Time for ever turning
Human grandeur to a jest !

SONGS OF
SIR THOMAS MORE'S FOOL

(From an Unpublished Play)

I

THE jolly world is for the rich
With jewels o'er his cloak there,
Throw the poor man in the ditch
To shiver and to soak there.

All the world is out of joint,
Cease then to endeavour ;
Sorrows find no ending here,
Never, never, never !

Up and down the river runs

Like the King's high favour.

Will the world be ever straight?

Never, never, never !

II

A LITTLE child in a field alone
Gathered the daisies while the sun
 shone,
'Twas off with their heads, heigh ho,
 heigh ho,
'Twas off with their heads, heigh ho !

And the ass's nose came over the fence,
For he sniffed the thistle's mellifluence,
'Twas off with its head, heigh ho, heigh
 ho,
'Twas off with its head, heigh ho !

And the hornet took his cousin, the wasp,
And holding him tight with a kinsman's
grasp,

'Twas off with his head, heigh ho, heigh ho,

'Twas off with his head, heigh ho !

III

'Tis a slippery place is London
Town,
For the good, the wise, and the
brave,
They fall the first, the last to stand
Is the motley fool and knave !

The surly Bishops came to Court
To kill Sir Thomas More,
Quoth he, "I long to see my Lord,
So let me go before."

And when beneath the headsman's axe
His soul to Heaven had gone,
A thousand thousand Saints uprose
To lead him to his throne !

THE PROFESSOR

ONCE on a time there lived at Göttingen
A man of music, doctor of that art,
Who fell in love in the decline of life,
And Maud, his wife, was young and beautiful.

Now the Professor was a silent man,
And though his heart ached when he looked
on Maud,

He ever lacked the occasion or the words
To tell her of the hunger of his soul.

To every man of intellect is given
A means to express the deepest of his
thoughts :

To the blessed it comes flowing from the
pen

In glorious verse, or heart-ensanguined prose,
To some it comes with painting, some with
speech :

But far in the great organ's maze of pipes,
The Professor found the voice that spoke
his soul !

To study, then, to Göttingen there came
The son of the Great Chamberlain of the
Court,

And when Maud looked upon the youthful
Karl,

She saw that he was comely in his strength ;
And in her sweet and gentle womanhood
The youth saw the fulfilment of all dreams !

And the Professor's fame spread far and
wide,

Bringing great crowds to the Cathedral nave
On Sunday evenings, when it was his wont
To play a voluntary that could speak
The deep emotions of his silent life.

And it befell that Karl and Maud below
Sat oft together, listening to the strains,
Till Heaven itself seemed opening above,
And there escaped between the unfolded
gates

The choir of the angels far within
Uplifted with Te Deums of the Saints !
And as he played, the souls of those below
Were cleansed, and earthly passion sank to
rest,

And as Karl looked upon the face of Maud,

It was transfigured as the face of one
That on some blessed vision long had gazed.
And so the happy hours of winter fled,
And summer came, and with it there arose
In the Professor's mind a haunting thought
That would not be gainsayed, whispering to
him

That Maud might all the while misjudge his
love,

Because the Palestrina that he played,
And other masters of the days of faith,
Spoke more to her of Heaven than of earth ;
More of the ecstasy of martyred Saints
Than of the living passions of mankind.
Yet as this thought was ripening in his
mind,

In very truth sweet Maud was day by day
C

For help against the tumult of her soul
Leaning on those austerest harmonies
That raised her from the grasp of earthly
 love
To serener regions of a love divine!

So, on a golden Sunday in hot June,
When summer's pomp was at its throbbing
 height,
These young ones knelt together in the
 church,
And, though she prayed for help, she felt
 her heart
Was going out to him, and he—poor youth!
At lightest touch of her soft garment's hem,
Was sick with a wild longing at his throat
No prayers nor supplications could assuage.

Then with clasped hands unto herself she
cried :—

“Now is the service done, and he will play
To me! only to me! and I shall hear !

This agony of earth will pass away,
The Heavens will speak to me,—I shall be
saved !”

Then did the pealing organ overhead
Burst forth, and on the instant to her soul
O'erwhelming came the despair of one be-
trayed !

For soaring upwards, on from strength to
strength,
Mounting and mounting, the great organ
rose,

Telling the glory of the love of man

In a rich tumult of compelling sounds.
Up and up surged the intoxicating strains,
Singing of beauty and eternal youth,
And of the brimming cup of living love !
And Karl bent nearer to her little ear,
“This world,” he murmured, “this world
and the next,
Time and eternity, are nothing worth,
If from this hour I may not worship you
With all the reverence that is in my soul.”
Then did it seem to her that faith was good
And duty good, and honour also good,
Aye ! but that love was greater than them
all ;
And forth she put her soft hand tremblingly,
And in his own Karl clasped it, and they
rose

And passed together down the long dim aisle,
Through the tall portal to the setting sun.

The Professor, in his lonely organ-loft,
Played on until the light began to fail;
At last he finished, and closed down the
keys.

“And now, at last,” he said, “she will have
learnt

There is a well of passion hid away
Silent so long, deep down within my
being!”

And down the winding stairway to the nave
The Professor went, with triumph in his
heart—

But they were gone, and he was there
alone!

THE ANGELUS

FORTH from the ivy tower
Against the golden West
The old bell chimes the hour
Of evening rest.

Across the dreaming world,
Over the wide wide sea
God sends to all His Peace,—
To you and me.

All acts are sanctified
As down the great sun dips,
Night consecrates the touch
Of lovers' lips.

And in the darkling hours
The springs of being prove
That love is very life
And life is love.

AN EPITAPH

Too beautiful for our dull praise,

A child of Heaven's birth

She whom we love ;

But lest we should lose Paradise

By finding it on earth

She went above !

GLORIA

HOPE

I

LOVE is a god ! he will not stay our bidding ;
Time soon will lay his heavy hand upon us ;
Then let us drain the brimming cup of
pleasure

Ere it be tasteless !

He is the patron of the young and happy.
Kissed lips are softest in life's dewy morning ;
Then let us pluck the roses in our spring-
time,

While they smell sweetly.

Love let us sing! who builds the fallen
palace ;

Sovran creator in a world of ruin,

Breath of all poets, glory of all women,

Love let us honour.

Praise him in the vernal hours,

Monarch of the budding flowers ;

Cup him till the feasters nod ;

Worship him—he is a god !

II

OVER the mountains in the sun
The blazing path to climb,
Down through the deep cool chestnut woods
In passion's summer-time ;
Over the lake of Coniston
Fair Gloria to row
With the dancing heart of sweet nineteen
That loved me long ago !

We cross the waters in a dream
And coast the farther shore,
We moor the boat and mount the slope
And near the poet's door,

Till at the gate with one soft touch
And one glance of her eye,
I know her for the loveliest thing
Under the wide wide sky !

III

SEE ! as she walks the flowers bow before
her

Where she is passing down the stately
garden.

Ah ! my heart fails ; my eyes dare not
adventure

Into such glory !

Nearer and nearer come her gentle footsteps,
Till I can hear the softness of her vesture,
Till I can feel her very breath upon me

Where I am kneeling.

Here stay I prostrate without word or
motion :

I dare not speak lest my rough words dis-
turb her,

Though at her feet there lie life, soul, and
body,

To do her bidding.

Onward she moves adown the pleasant
wood-walks,

Through gleam and shadow thrown by
swaying branches.

Ah ! she has gone and breathed no word of
pity !

I am forsaken.

IV

CALLOW care, to others fly,
Dwell not in my lady's eye ;
Sorrow, with your hollow cheek,
Go some sterner victim seek.

Crabbèd age, with wrinkled laugh,
Limping on your crooked staff,
Never on my lady's face
Dare your cruel lines to trace.

Love, be her companion sweet,
Gently guide her dainty feet ;
Put to shame the spangled skies
Gazing from her tender eyes.

D

V

THAT Time should one day wan that face

And dim those glorious eyes,

That Death should ever dare embrace

A spirit from the skies,

Are all that gave my fainting heart

A chance for pity there,

Where I have played the suppliant's part,

Refusing to despair !

Perhaps thou wilt not deign to mourn

Or care when I am gone,

While I with this last song must turn

And face my fate alone.

Perhaps into a world I go

Where men think not nor weep,

A place where love has drowned its woe

And where the broken sleep !

VI

HER beauty showed, as God intended,
Her gentle mind's reflections;
Her very loveliness offended
Our mortal imperfections.

And though the gift of Pentecost
Were mine, I could but wait
Prone like a spirit of the lost,
Silent at Heaven's gate.

FULFILMENT

VII

FAR up the river through the sunny
meadows,

Heaven and earth attending on her beauty,
Gloria floats reclining like a Dryad

Lost in a day-dream.

Long as the blazing noon is passing west-
ward

Under the trees we sit among the fern-
brakes,

There of the world forgetful and forgotten

Plucking the lotus.

Then in the evening down the peaceful
waters

Homeward we glide with sleepy rhythmic
splashing,

Gloria silent, by the tangled wood-walks
Sweetly dishevelled.

On his last flight the droning beetle hurries,
Out of the East the purple night arises,
Lonely in Heaven above the amber sun-glow
Rapturous Venus.

Quitting the oars I lay me down before her ;
On her pure hand my lips profane adventure ;

Into her soul a pang of pity enters :

I am forgiven.

Stars in the sky above us dance for gladness ;
Over the world the night wind sighs with
 passion,
Breathing her name, my Queen, my Queen
 for ever,

Gloria regnans !

VIII

UP through love's infinite ascent
I climbed from steep to steep ;
Into her soul I poured my own—
'Twas deep calling to deep—
Till in the silence of that night
'Neath the stars we stood alone :
She turned and gave herself to me,
And her sweet lips touched my own.

IX

THE joys laid up hereafter
For the spirits of the just
May pass man's understanding
Till dust returns to dust;
But in this flesh corruptible
With love's first kiss arise
Visions transfiguring the earth
Into a Paradise.

SEPARATION

X

LAST night we parted at the gate
Where Love with us had often sat ;
Hand linked in hand we went forlorn
Adown the pathway through the corn ;
One longing clasp of breast to breast,
One choking sob told all the rest !
Our sun went down ; no hope, no light !
Last night, last night !

Oh ! halting tongue, attempt no speech
When hearts are severed each from each ;

Oh ! anguish inarticulate,
When soul from soul is separate.
Dark and alone my life must be
Till Gloria come to comfort me !
My sun went down ; no hope, no light !
Last night, last night !

XI

Now in the silent hours of the night,
Far o'er the cold earth under northern
 skies,

Nestled she lies so fragrant and so white,
The happy pillow kissing her closed eyes.

Sleep on, my little sweet and twenty, sleep
While all the angels guard your purity ;
And in my dreams I'll touch that scarlet lip
That never speaks but in dear charity.

XII

THE seaweed in the dim-lit cave
Awaits the sure returning wave ;
The rustling corn beneath the stars
Awaits the crimson Eastern bars ;
When Gloria is gone I must
Secure my peace in perfect trust.

XIII

GOOD fare, a happy company
And laughter free,
And toasts and healths, and merry
jests
And jollity.

A pushing back of chairs, farewells
Till next we meet,
A muffling on of coats, and then
The moon-blanced street.

Night with her silent sovereignty

Asserts her power ;

The old church clock tolls out

The midnight hour ;

And Jupiter looks down across

The silver seas,

Abetting the sweet influence of

The Pleiades.

Ah ! did I then for one short hour

Forget you, dear ?

Come back then into my poor heart,

And fill it here,—

Here in the solitary street,

Silent and white,

Beneath the innumerable stars

And sacred night !

Cold moon, I gaze into your face

With wistful eyes,

For you can shine across the world

Where Gloria lies.

Queen of the night, regard us both

With kindly eye,

And gather us to your white heart

Benignantly.

Eternal night and everlasting

Starry sky,

I know not aught of what ye are

Or what am I.

But this I know,—Love can alone

All things restore,

And of that love supreme ye speak

For evermore!

XIV

WHEN in the dawn awake I lie,
Over the world my fancies fly
To a little chamber, white and fair,
With all I love enclosed there ;
And I whisper in her dainty ear,
“Ah, Gloria, as fair as dear,
Come back to me ere summer’s flown ;
Come soon, come soon !”

The rosy sun through casement peeping
Can kiss her there so gently sleeping,

Can mingle with her dream's sweet story
And bathe her tender limbs in glory ;
Ah ! happy sun ! that I were there !
Ah, Gloria, as dear as fair,
Come back to me ere summer's flown ;
Come soon, come soon !

XV

OVER the high full moon to-night

The fleecy clouds are flying,

The ministry of spangled frost

Along the wet road lying ;

Past midnight, and the last footfall

Has passed my cottage door ;

Below the cliff the sleepless waves

Break on the dreaming shore ;

And far away the headlands dim

Fade in the glimmering haze ;

The flowing tide comes brimming in,
Deep in enchanted bays ;

And the great love that throngs my heart
Unveils all to my sight,
And gives me soul to know and feel
The loveliness of night !

XVI

I AWAKEN in the darkness of the night,
And the rain and wind are roaring from
the sea ;

I stretch my arms to clasp her in affright,
And a dread empty silence mocks at me.

'Tis said far over darkling hill and dale,
And o'er the star-lit multitudinous main,
Bringing its love-song like the nightingale,
That soul can speak to soul and back
again.

Yet give to me, dear Lord, what once has
been :

Two hearts together singing to one song.

How long must earth and ocean roll be-
tween ?

Ah ! waiting, breaking heart ! how long ?
how long ?

XVII

SINK, sink, red sun, into the West,
Flash out, dim stars, upon the night,
Roll faster round, great world, and bring
My best belovèd to my sight !

REUNION

XVIII

OVER the murky earth I sweep
Through black night in the roaring
train,
Mile after mile, while the world's asleep,
Up out of death to life again !

I hear her calling from afar ;
She leans from Heaven to take my
hand ;
She rises with the morning star
Across the waking sea and land,

Each scarlet lip a lover's choice,
Her eyes the world's enravishment,
And to the mortal ear her voice
The harmony of the firmament !

Throw wide the everlasting gate,
And lead me to love's crown and throne.
Into your heart inviolate,
Ah ! let me melt, belovèd one !

XIX

MUSIC in a rhythmic measure
Throbbing down the corridor,
Silk and satin, and light laughter,
Mellow lights and polished floor.

Mazy waltz whose dainty motion
Makes fair women doubly fair,
Jocund youth and careless beauty
Sweeping by together there.

She is there among the dancers :
I am there too, but unseen,
Watching all her gracious movements,
Gloria, my Queen, my Queen !

On her dazzling neck and shoulders,
On her head set royally,
On the sweet lines of her bosom,
Falls the light caressingly.

She is mine, all mine for ever,
Mine ! mine to the uttermost !
And for that immortal guerdon
I would count the world well lost !

XX

I'VE a cottage down out Devon way
 With a garden and a stream,
And a lawn with leaning apple trees
 That droop their limbs and dream.

And the robins and the thrushes
 And the little Jenny wren
Are nesting in the bushes,
 For the spring is round again.

The nipping blasts are over,
 And the south-west wind's begun,
And the rosebuds round the casement
 Are swinging in the sun ;

And all the world is humming
 May's rapturous high tune
And Gloria is coming
 To crown the pomp of June !

XXI

FAR, far away, and hand in hand,
 Along the silent meadow,
They fade into the distant land
 Down the valley of the shadow.

And when the inexorable hour
 Descends when all must part,
Then love itself has lost its power
 To comfort the torn heart.

Ah ! look not after them in vain :
 To die may be to live :
They know the sum of loss and gain,
 They would not have you grieve.

And if upon the new-turned sod
 Unchecked those tears must flow,
They shall be gathered up by God
 To crown her starry brow.

Then let us closelier bounden be
 By that great sorrow past;
And may it be vouchsafed that we
 Go hand in hand at last!

LOSS

XXII

VEILED by no cloud the Sovran Sun
 blazed from above,
As I went up across the heath
 to meet my love.
So will all Nature, smiling, mock
 at credulous men,
When God resolves the world to chaos
 back again.
So was it on that day, though no
 cold word was said,
Yet on the instant sure I knew
 myself betrayed !

XXIII

THERE'S passion in the gold king-cup,
And a glory in the sky ;
And the gallant Spring comes marching up
With the love-light in his eye !

But love in May grows cold in June,
And false before September ;
And sweetest songs are out of tune
Long, long before December.

And I am old and weary, dear,
And pride must break or bend ;
What's gone is gone for ever here
Unto the sad world's end !

XXIV

DEAR, when I would have kissed,
You turned away ;
Love's benediction missed
And went astray.

Surely on some far shore
Beyond our sky
Is garnered evermore
Each lover's sigh !

Surely, though passion fail
In you for me,
'Tis fit my troth prevail
Eternally !

Therefore for what is past—

Known, felt, and seen—

I'll thank God to the last

That it has been !

XXV

FAIR daughter of a traitor race
That took the love it ne'er returned,
In the cold beauty of your face
I read the fate those others learned.

Is there no spell to bring you near,
And have I lived my life in vain ?
Is there no word, however dear,
To win you back to me again ?

If from the past I now must part,
If love again can never be,
Ah ! take your hand from off my heart,
And may the dear Lord comfort me !

XXVI

AH ! dearest faithless one,
Guide of my lost life's story ;
O'er whose heart do you reign ?
Where waste you now your glory ?

Sings he the poet's song
To celebrate your beauty ?
Owns he the painter's soul
To worship as a duty ?

Will he your sweet self make
His religion and his faith,
Enthroning you in heaven
Above all life and death ?

Nay! he can never know
All that such passion means,
As in my heart of hearts
I gave my Queen of Queens!

XXVII

PAST the old haunts ! the farm upon the
hill,

The river like a thread of silver lies :

I see the waving corn and poppies still,

The world all gold, the Sun God in the
skies,

Peace in the heart, and love-light in the
eyes

Of long ago.

Past the old haunts ! past hill and farm
again,

And river like a path of silver spread :

No sun, no corn, no golden world remain ;

And love grows faint, and vain regret is
dead :

Pain alone stays when all the rest has
fled

Of long ago !

XXVIII

DEAR, is it nothing—all the years

Of an adoring love ?

Is it nothing that I raised to you

What saints accept above ?

When the hunger of my heart blots out

All things in Heaven and earth,

When I would die that you might live,

Is it all nothing worth ?

Close down the page then, write no more,

And let the curtain fall ;

For life is naught, and death is naught,

Where love is all in all.

Without a pang you take away

All which I thought my own ;

So here's the end : and I must fare

Into the world alone !

XXIX

AH ! had I thought thou couldst be false

And wear a double face,

Or that such innocent sweet looks

Could hide deceit so base,

I had not given thee the life

I cannot take again,

Nor brought thee through the door of love

Into my heart in vain !

But he who gave the tender soul

By woman to be vexed

Left it to bear the utmost pains

Of this world or the next ;

And though henceforth the Lord of Hell
For ever be my guest,
Yet from the Pit I'll lift my prayer
That thou still shalt be blessed !

LOOKING BACK

THE flowers still blow upon the hill
Where we together stood,
The winds sigh through the solemn trees
In which the rooks still brood ;
Yet all the glory of the world
That stretches to the sea
But celebrates my loneliness
Since Gloria went from me.

The deep below, the sky above
Reck not of human ills ;
There comes no comfort from the waves
Nor answer from the hills.

Careless of mortal miseries,
Renewed from day to day,
Taking no heed of any prayers
The great globe goes its way.

Yet when I stood here long ago
And watched the flowing tide,
The world seemed full of grace and hope
With Gloria at my side ;
For when we love, a deeper sight
GOD's mercy yet may send,
And what the reason still denies
The heart may comprehend.

SONGS TO DESIDERIA

SONGS TO DESIDERIA

I

HEAVEN'S consecrations compass me about,—

an angel band,—

When for a moment palm to palm I clasp

thy gentle hand ;

Though in my erring pilgrimage I have

offended much,

All evil dreams, imaginations, thoughts, flee

at thy touch !

And as I rise and part, in reverence I take

from thee

Sense that I stood within the stainless veil

uplift for me ;

Leave but to worship, at thy feet to kneel
is all I ask,
Give me the Sunshine of thy heart of hearts,
there let me bask !

II

AH ! why should lovers evermore be blind
And wandering vainly to each other call,
Searching the world for one they never find,
Till the last hour descends and closes all ?

Oh ! but for once to love and to be loved,
To reach for once the core of passion's
 fire,
To know for once the faith of woman
 proved,
To clasp for once the ultimate heart's
 desire !

Then when the pulses sink and pleasure
 fails,

When youth and beauty give us the go by,
When all regrets are vain, when nought
 avails,

And passion's day is done,—then let me die!

III

How can you write so tenderly

Who love from me withhold

With heart as inaccessible

As Pole-Star, and as cold ?

A gentle touch, quickly withdrawn,

A smile that comes too late,

Glimpses of inner Paradise

To one kept at the gate.

A word half loving taken back,

Repulse, soul hunger, pain,

Then the cold shoulder of the world

Between us once again !

Dear, from this doubting misery

Give me my soul's release,

Yield me your heart, and let me know

True love's impassioned peace !

IV

THEY talk of Botticelli and his mediæval
Saints,

But there's none to touch my lady 'mong
the angels that he paints,

And all his hallowed eremites are nothing to
my dear

With the shadow of a glory in the wavings
of her hair.

The poets praise the Medici, that little Queen
of Love,

And other marble effigies of goddesses above,

But had they lived to look on her, they
would confess, I swear,
That all their stone Divinities were nothing
to my dear.

Then let them keep their paintings of the
faded Saints of old
And all their graven images of Venus still
and cold,
Give me the glance of life and love in
Desideria's eyes,
And the white wonder of her arms enclosing
Paradise !

V

GIVE me, dear Lord, the patient will
To wait without the closed door,
To love in absence deeper still
And trust through silence evermore.

VI

OH, it's weary, weary, waiting
On this farther shore,
And there's one that lingers, lingers,
Till my heart grows sore ;
For the world is palpitating
To the sun above,
And the coming up of summer
Shouts of life and love ;
And the cuckoos and the swallows
In a thronging band
They are winging, winging northward
Over sea and land,

Where the Southern skies are blazing

On the budding vine,—

And it's oh ! for her heart on my heart

And her lips on mine !

VII

WHEN Desideria with a glance
My willing heart enchains,
The raptures of a thousand springs
Rush tingling through my veins,
And while the reason warns the mind
How false Love's beacon gleams,
The living soul within me laughs,
Builds castles, and dreams dreams !

And though beside her innocence
My whole life seems a sham,
Though she belongs to Paradise
And I—am what I am !

Yet there's a passion in my heart

That prudence cannot check,

For in a vision I have felt

Her arms about my neck !

VIII

IF word of mine has brought you pain

Ask me not to repent,

No speech of you my lip could stain

That was not reverent;

Should you forbid me to declare

What cannot be unsaid,

'Tis to condemn my life to share

The silence of the dead.

For dwelling sanctified apart

Where evil never trod,

There has been gathered to your heart

The providence of GOD,

My very prayers by night and day

Your intercession need,

And if you now should turn away

Then am I lost indeed !

IX

YOU'RE just the fairest of the fair
Down to your finger-tips ;
Come to me, sweet and twenty-one,
Give me your rosy lips !

To-morrow brings your birthday round,
And till the world shall cease
GOD keep you, dearest of the dear,
And fill you with His peace.

Time works his will with both of us,
With each in different ways,
For you ascend while I go down
The stairways of our days.

Alas ! for me the falling hours
Are stealing youth away,
I cannot feel as once I felt
The live-long happy day.

Yet when in benediction
Your soft eyes rest on me,
I take again the dancing heart
Of jocund twenty-three!

X

WHEN every flower of the world
 Had perished in the frost,
When every day was desolate
 And every hope was lost,
When love was dead, and faith had failed
 And memory was pain,
Into your own you took my heart
 And bade it live again !

And now the glory of the earth
 Is visible once more
And visions of GOD'S Paradise
 Through the unfolded door,

And choirs of the cherubim

Are chanting from above

That till the law of death be dead

The law of life is love !

XI

ARE not all things elusive that are fair ?
And difficult of access that are sweet ?
Lest the unworthy should find entrance there
Where timorously tread the reverent feet !
Therefore you vanish to the land of dreams,
A phantom of the memory night and day,
And I am left the silent solitude
That lingers in the chamber where you lay.
Though you have gone, the sense of you
remains,
An exquisite thought, an aspiration fair,
A tender vision the soul dwells upon
And dwelling on it finds itself in prayer.

XII

WHENE'ER I hear your gentle voice
 Speak softly in my ear,
Life seems no more a mystery
 But a gift great and clear ;
And through the years while I survive,
 The memory is mine
Of having held my breath and felt
 An ecstasy divine.

Yet when we parted in the gloom
 Of that far Northern land,
And on my shoulder tremblingly
 You laid your tender hand,

Without a word I went my way
Transfigured blessedly,
As though an angel had passed by,
Touched, and absolved me.

For there's a love too deep for speech,
Too wonderful for tears,
Recorded by the Seraphim
Amid the silent spheres ;
Communion sweet of life with life
Each in the other blent,
The sublimation of two souls,
A stainless Sacrament.

XIII

SOON we shall meet, and then will come to
me

Sense of your presence turning the heart faint
With sick desire ; the little diamond
Sparkling his passionless eye, close nestling
warm

In rapturous couch where I adventure not
Will mock me with each tender taken breath ;
And I shall marvel at the glories given
To stocks and stones, while I who live and
long

May never touch those lily sanctities,—
My throne and kingdoms in a world profane !

And will you look above my lowly head?
Ah, most Adorable! the Saints in Heaven
Need not the benediction of your eyes
So much as I; and the long nights and days
Are not enough for me to celebrate
All the sweet reasons of my jealousy
Till you look down with pity where I lie.

XIV

WITH every day you grow in loveliness,
The very perfect flower of the world
Before all time divinely fore-ordained
To be the guerdon of some King of men ;
And though I see you in my dreams removed
Far from me up the innumerable stairs
Whose top is lost in glory round your feet,
Though I may never climb up to your side
Yet will I dare to spread aspiring wings ;
The shattered majesty of Icarus
Prone on the waves magnificent appears
Beyond fulfilled desires of lesser souls !
And since the day when under Summer skies

The splendid vision of your beauty dawned
Bringing a tumult of sweet thronging love,
A mad impulse has overwhelmed my heart
To hazard life and death for such a prize ;
And being a man, ah ! Desideria !
Death would be joy, oblivion ecstasy,
Did you vouchsafe me a last sanctuary
To breathe this world away upon your lips.

XV

LISTEN to me ! Divinest Heart of Hearts !
Life has no meaning till love enters in.
Probing and delving till their backs are
 bent
And eyes are dimmed, the thinkers of the
 world
Seek the solution of its mystery,
But it remains ever insoluble ;
And some go mad, and others break their
 hearts
When at the last they find all spent for
 naught.

Ah ! if they only knew that from such fate
One gentle hand outstretched might rescue
 them,

That into their sad tangled lives, confused,
Astray, obscure, and full of weariness
One lovely influence has power to heal,
Transform, and bring in quiet thankfulness,
Then would they surely rise up and go forth
Among the flowers under the blue sky,
Learning at last all that they need to learn,
That one who loves has never lived in vain.

For Truth is of the Spirit, and descends
Freely to poet-heart of happy lover.
Therefore all ye who know the glorious
 pangs
Of passion, unto you alone is given

Truly to find the meaning of the world,
The mystery of being, testifying
That darkly without hope men wander here
Until they reach this everlasting door
Into the House of Life, where hand in hand
With the Belov'd upon the blazing threshold
They hear the morning stars together sing
And all the Sons of GOD shouting for joy!

XVI

IN the turmoil of the city and the wrangling
of the courts

I feel my heart beat faster as you rush upon
my thoughts,

In a moment Heaven opens, revealed to me
alone,

Transported by a magic that visits and is
gone !

And in the dreaming country soft voices
come to me

From fields and falling waters, and from
the far-off sea,

And whisp'ring airs at evening among the
solemn trees

And callings from the midnight chimes across
the moonlit leas.

Then into the world's dusty paths I carry
back again

A haunting tender memory that nothing can
profane,

I have communed with your spirit in the
heart of hill and dale,

For love reveals GOD's secrets,—I have stood
within the veil !

XVII

LAST SONG TO DESIDERIA

THE comforters have left me, I am alone ;
Close down the foolish page, shut the world's
door,
Break, break, oh desolate heart ! for she is
gone,
Gone, gone for ever, and for evermore !

Deep in the earth is Desideria laid
With a stone set at her feet and at her head ;
All debts between my GOD and me are paid
For love is all ; and all is finishèd.

Come then to-night, again, oh mighty Death
And join my soul to hers thou hast removed ;
Across the world there steals the tremulous
breath

Of the last infinite dawn !—I come, Beloved.

THE END

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